

## Lessons Learned Record of Interview

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LL-01				
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LL-01				
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<b>Key Topics:</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COIN</li> <li>• Baseline documents</li> <li>• Personalities</li> </ul>				
<b>Key:</b> "direct quote from interview subject"; [summary or background in analyst's words]; plain text is best estimation of verbatim				

### Key takeaways:

#### Criticism of COIN

- If security is the most important thing, then there is very steep reduction over the long period of time when there is a rise in troops.
- I do not believe in COIN. It is a *method*, not a strategy. You're countering insurgents.
- Examples of COIN against insurgents: In Colombia, it was all internal, against the government. With Colonial powers, the government is pretty much gone and the colonizer controls the government and can bring force to bear. With the US, we project our power into a sovereign country by using its government's help to control the war. You pretty much lose right away. It's a foreign culture and a foreign force going in that will be hated by the population over time.
- Korea's a good example: we stayed there and controlled things from there.
- McCrystal adopts COIN hook, line, and sinker. It makes no sense, but we are for "government in a box." COIN is always different; it doesn't lend itself to doctrine.
- Obama announced the withdrawal in 2009 and we had to show gains in two years before drawing down, but none of this was sustainable. There were flawed assumptions in Afghanistan in operations and strategy. This happened with cost assumptions: what resources will it take to reduce the enemy in the area? What cultural assumptions did we make? Tribal/group alliances?

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A good example is the South, when Helmand (RC SW) was split from Kandahar. The assumption was that people didn't like the Taliban and that they were willing to accept the government. In Kandahar, there was no intention of supporting the government, and certainly not the Americans. In RC East, there was the assumption that Pakistan would take up that part of the fight. Instead, they shelled us.

- Security: too short-term of a view. Intelligence: too pessimistic of a view. There were two sets of criteria, really.
- 2003 and the Rumsfeld Memos: it looks like we may have to do reconstruction in Afghanistan. The narrative was that Iraq looks good, so let's try it in Afghanistan. This just shows how messed up the war in Iraq was. If we hadn't taken our eyes off Iraq, we could have done this in Afghanistan.
- Security is THE piece. We were in a wishful thinking phase in post-surge in Iraq.
  - Ex) Kapisa as a mobility corridor. We take the middle ground, which is the worst place to be. Wipe or ignore.
- What is the mechanism for transferring funds to Afghanistan after 2017 if we decide to stay?

### Baseline documents

- CENTCOM Commander sends weekly updates to SecDef for his AO.
- PAC Coordination Cell (2010-?) was run by the Pentagon and was the baby of McCrystal. J3/J5 people. It eventually became the CT Coordination Cell, which was a clearinghouse for all documents. This was useful for the transition period. [REDACTED] keeps a chronology from PAC. It's strong on the surge period but not before. The early period is highly classified.
- Ridel Report: Projection of forces – they want to go much higher (J5). The White House hammers at them until their lowest estimate becomes the highest. The process took one year. The White House thought J5 came up with three solutions: one real one and two stupid ones. There were constant requests for new, tactical options. It was too much.

### Personalities

- Mullen is quick, shoots from the hip [did not mesh well with Obama.] Woodward captures this [dynamic] well. Dempsey was a thinker, nuanced, and was a strategist attuned to what Obama's thinking.